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Sent: Sunday, February 24, 2008 7:03 PM
To: MLPAComments
Cc: archerj@mcn.org
Subject: MLPA science data

Just want to share my comments, concerns and findings with those involved with the MPA's decision making process. I had been fishing in the Subregion 2 area 1995 -2001 as a commercial rockfish harvester. Stopped fishing 2001-2007 do to permitting restrictions. I returned to fishing this area in the Summer of 2007.

There has been a complete rebound of fish stocks including Benthic species such as Gopher rockfish. The catch is 3-4 times as it was in 2000 with same gear methods and effort. The catch rate is consistent from Ft Ross to the Sea Ranch. The fish are a little smaller in the southern region probably due to local access. Gopher rockfish for an example average 10-11 inches south of Stewarts point and 11-12 inches north of Black point and China rockfish average 11-12 inches south of Stewarts point and 12-14 inches north of Black point. In February 2008 the large breeders have returned throughout the region in great numbers with roe in them. I consider my science data to be unbiased since this whole area has been an MPA since the early recreational closure in October 2007. Take note these fish tend to scatter with too much local presence.

Stewarts point is a very popular area to fish with the private boat recreation anglers and also has some of the best hard bottom habitat. With a complete closure from Black point to Gerstle cove I'm afraid will drive all this effort north into Sea Ranch and Gualala which has less hard bottom habitat. A southern closure or a northern closure and maybe combination of both will prevent this fishing effort from migrating north. What I am saying is leave Stewarts Point area open! Currently there is no commercial presence other than myself and I am a part timer. I hope this information will clarify some of the differences in the five proposals.

Also, more needs to be done with the catch and release of Benthic rockfishes. Some recreational anglers continue to throw back unwanted fish. This is probably due to the low catch limit of 10 per person. I'm afraid this has lead to a catch and release mentality until the desired catch has been caught. Who is monitoring this? I am. This can be easily identified by the a amount of sea bird surrounding an individual boat. Make this illegal or give give me a permit to scoop these fish from the surface. I'm sure there is a market for these discards. Thanks for reading my post,

Dan Helminiak